Ruby Book 2-1-2

May 4, 1964

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mr. J. Lee Rankin, General Counsel

FROM: Howard P. Willens

RE: Right Wing Associations of Jack Ruby

I do not find the attached material of particular relevance to the question of whether we should examine any official from the Birch Society. If that is the proposition before us for decision, I am against it.

Evidence before the Commission should be limited to persons who have knowledge of facts which are relevant to the Commission's investigation. This was the Commission's justification for hearing Mark Lane. It is because of the absence of such indication that I feel it is not necessary to hear Mr. Buchanan, although I would be prepared to compromise on this point in view of the other considerations. No such considerations are present, however, in the case of the Birch Society. The Birch Society is free just as any other political group in the United States, to correspond with the Commission and express its views of the facts, or of the Commission, or of President Kennedy. I am sure that our correspondence contains letters from people who are members of the Birch Society expressing themselves quite freely on these issues. There are no indications that I am aware of suggesting that the leaders of the Birch Society have any facts which are relevant to our work.

Furthermore, I think that calling representatives of any right wing group would be viewed as an effort by the Commission to attach responsibility for the assassination, at least in part, on an atmosphere of extremism in Dallas. As you know, I think this is a particularly troublesome question and I believe that the Commission in its final report should not wander into this swamp unless it is absolutely essential.

If the issue is whether or not further investigation should be conducted as to the association of Ruby with right wing groups, I do not have as firm a position. Several of the items on the attached page seem to me to reflect no more than Ruby's publicly stated antagonism for right wing groups. Other items suggest an association without indication as to whether it is a cooperative, antagonistic or neutral association. This may be, incidentally, another area where interrogation of Ruby, even under present circumstances, might be useful.